



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Budget and Finance Committee approves the Navajo Nation Chapter's Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects list

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee approved the Navajo Nation Chapter's Infrastructure Improvement Priority Projects list for FY2013-2018. The Capital Improvement Project list consists of projects from most of the 110 chapters on the Navajo Nation.

"This legislation was introduced in April 2013 and resulted in work sessions with chapter officials discussing proposed capital projects in their areas," said legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels).

According to Delegate Hale, all chapters that requested a capital project to be added to the priority list had to submit chapter resolutions, including project proposals.

"At this point, we have the majority of chapters that have already submitted their chapter resolutions with the exception of 13 chapters," said Delegate Hale.

Included in the presentation, Chief Justice Herb Yazzie explained the importance of the CIP priority list and spoke on behalf of the Judicial Branch in regards to the construction of a new Supreme Court building.

"About six years ago, we started on a dream to obtain a judicial complex to house the Supreme Court, court administration, peacemaking, and probation programs," said Chief Justice Yazzie. "We are construction ready and ask that we be put at the top of the priority list."

Currently, the list includes 105 projects from each of the Nation's five agencies and the Navajo Nation Capital, according to the CIP report.

"How many of these projects are actually project-ready?" asked BFC member Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tse Chi'zhi).

Delegate Hale responded, "The FY2014 priority list is project-ready and is awaiting funding to begin construction. Every year until FY2018, the list will be reevaluated to reflect project-ready sites only."

The funding of the capital projects was a concern posed by BFC members.

“I do not see any language in this legislation that authorizes a bond [to finance these projects],” said BFC member Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tse Si’ani, Wide Ruins). “There needs to be language or another legislation that addresses how the Nation will fund these developments.”

BFC member Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock) stated, “The stock market has been good to us and we should use the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund to finance these projects and get them completed as soon as possible.”

Delegate Hale explained that the capital projects were originally to be funded by the interest of the Navajo Nation’s Permanent Trust Fund, but the goal now is to approve the priority listing first. He also noted that creating a concurrent legislation for funding the projects would cause confusion, but will be initiated after the priority listing is finalized.

“If the CIP list is not approved soon, it will only cause further delay. If we opt to finance, we will lose money on interest rates because the money will end up sitting there and interest will add up,” said Delegate BeGaye.

At the end of the discussion, BFC voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0118-13 and will move on to the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee for consideration.

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